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REPORT NO.

50X1

COUNTRY USSR (Estonian SSR)

DATE DISTR. 18 Nov. 1953

SUBJECT 1. Consumer Goods and Services in Estonia
2. Cost of Living in Estonia

NO. OF PAGES 7

PLACE
ACQUIRED

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NO. OF ENCLS. 1 Annex
(LISTED BELOW)DATE
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REPORT NO.

DATE OF INFORMATION

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

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1. I am able to give the approximate prices of various consumer goods in Estonia after the last reduction in April/May 1953. Although most of my information was obtained in the village of Abja N 58-07, E 25-21 and the town of Viljandi N 59-07, E 25-21 I believe the price levels quoted are roughly the same throughout Estonia. In those cases where prices of items were obtained in places other than Abja and Viljandi, the place is given. See Annex A for specific price listings. I noticed no particular price variations from market to market. I know that in large cities, such as Tallinn N 59-25, E 24-42 prices were likely to be "a few kopeks" higher than in the towns and villages. The prices varied from category to category within each classification. Since I was not part of a regular family group, I cannot give any information on monthly budgets of different families.
2. I have no information about the cost of meals and refreshments in factories. However, it is my belief that the cost of meals in factories would be lower than in public places, but that the quality of the food served in factories would not be as high. The average price of a three course meal in a third class public dining place (stolovaya) was five or six rubles. The price of a sandwich was about 1.5 rubles, while a cold hamburger cost two rubles. A piece of pie cost one ruble.

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3. Although fresh foods, including vegetables and fruits, were available in sufficient supply at local markets, dried, canned, smoked, and frozen foods were only available in state stores and cooperatives. Because of the high cost of the latter items, however, they were seldom purchased. I do not have any detailed information on the actual cost of these food items.

4. Although in the larger cities and towns good hotel rooms and other accommodations were available to the public, it was not easy to secure them without resorting to bribery. The cost of hotel accommodations might best be illustrated as follows:

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In small towns such as Abja, there was a dormitory for visitors which usually was not crowded. One had to pay not more than five rubles for a bed.

5. I can provide information regarding only a few personal services, as follows:

- a. Laundries - available in the larger cities and towns; but I do not know the cost of such service.
- b. Photographers - available in all populated areas. The cost of six passport-size photographs three centimeters by five centimeters was 13 rubles; cost of six medium sized photographs five centimeters by eight centimeters was 16-18 rubles; the cost of six postcard-size photographs was 23 rubles (in Riga, in July 1953).
- c. Barber Shops - available in all populated areas. A haircut cost 2.2 rubles, while a shave cost 0.9 to 1 ruble.
- d. So far as I know, all community services were provided by the state, including libraries, public gathering or meeting places, and political indoctrinational and propaganda rooms. The facilities listed above were available in all populated areas.
- e. In regard to educational facilities, elementary education was provided free of charge to all individuals. Secondary education cost 150 rubles per year. I have no information on university or higher education.
- f. Motion pictures were available to the people in all populated areas. In the larger centers, of course, regular movie houses were set up, while in the smaller communities motion pictures were provided once or twice a fortnight by traveling operators. The price of a single ticket varied from 1 to 4.5 rubles.
- g. Theater, sporting events, dances and meetings were provided for the people in all populated places. In the smaller centers such events were held only every two or three weeks. The cost of a single theater ticket was 6 to 10 rubles. Dances cost two or three rubles, with an additional cloakroom charge of one ruble. Sport events (athletics, volley ball, swimming, soccer, skiing) were sometimes free, while at other times a small fee of one to two rubles was charged.

6. I cannot quote the official rental rates for housing, but I believe them to be low. Because of the severe housing shortage which prevailed throughout Estonia, however, it was next to impossible to obtain adequate housing through official channels. Rather, one had to resort to more devious means, such as bribing landlords and those tenants who had extra space, in order to obtain even a single room

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in a flat. I know of a student who occupied a tiny attic chamber in Tallinn for which he paid 50 rubles monthly. As for construction of new housing, it was practically at a standstill as the result of the extreme shortage and expense of essential building materials. In Abja, for example, only three new homes were constructed between 1945 and 1953. The heating of individual homes varied from place to place. In rural areas the population was obliged to cut its own wood in local forests, paying a nominal price for it to the state. In the market places in cities and towns, however, wood cost from 50 to 100 rubles per cubic meter. Electricity for private use was generally available at reasonable prices, but the service, particularly in rural districts, was low.

7. In regard to wages, I can give only the wage norms of the Committee for Road Maintenance, 50X1

50X1 I believe, however, that these norms prevailed throughout Estonia. The norms were approximately as follows:

- a. For work of a non-standardized nature, for which no hourly production quotas could be fixed, 1.6 rubles per hour.
- b. Loading of gravel and stone, 0.55 rubles per ton; unloading of gravel and stone, 0.33 rubles per ton; digging of stone and gravel, 1.4 rubles for the equivalent of 1.8 tn.
- c. Escorting a horse, with or without load, 0.36 rubles per kilometer.
- d. Driving a motor vehicle, 0.06 rubles per kilometer.

On the average it was possible for a man engaged in such work to earn 28 rubles per day. The digging of various types of ditches paid from two to three rubles hourly, depending upon the difficulty of the terrain, while maintenance work on the ditches, once they were completed, paid 0.80 rubles per meter. This latter type of work was the easiest and most profitable, because one could earn as much as 40 rubles per day by engaging in ditch maintenance work.

8. The following are the wages earned by various friends and acquaintances:

- a. For woodcutting the workers received from 8 to 10 rubles per square meter. (On the market a square meter of wood cost from 50 to 100 rubles.)
- b. For the digging of one wagon-load of peat, one received from 40 to 50 rubles.
- c. Bakers received 0.05 rubles per kilogram for finished baked products.
- d. Metal workers, fifth category, received two rubles per hour.
- e. Metal workers, seventh and eighth category, received 2.89 rubles per hour.
- f. Carpenters (woodworkers) received slightly less than metal workers of the same category.
- g. Shoemakers, seventh category, received 2.08 rubles per hour.
- h. The chairman of the kolkhoz in Abja received a salary of 1,200 rubles monthly. Kolkhozniki received 500 gr. of grain per norm day.

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9. I paid the following taxes to the state:

- a. Income tax - six per cent of my wages.
- b. Bachelor tax - six per cent of my wages.
- c. Union dues - five rubles monthly.
- d. State loan - on the average, one month's pay per year.

Annex:

- A. Cost of Living Reference Sheet on Prices in Estonia from April-May 1953

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Annex A:

Cost of Living Reference Sheet on Prices in Estonia from April-May 1953

[S - Store; M - Market (bazaar)]

FOODSTUFFS

Black bread, kg.	1.8 - 2 rubles (S)
White bread, kg.	2½ rubles (S)
Milk, liter	Approximately 1.5 rubles; 2.5 rubles in Riga, July 1953 (M)
Eggs, ea. or dozen	Abja - 55-60 kopecks each; Tallinn- 80-100 kopecks each (M)
Butter, kg.	Kolkhoz - 30-33 rubles; dairy butter 35-38 rubles (M and S)
Cheese, kg.	About 20 rubles (S)
Sugar, kg.	About 11 rubles (S)
Pork, 1st grade, kg.	About 25 rubles (M)
Veal, 1st grade, kg.	10-11 rubles (M)
Fish, 2nd grade, kg.	Fresh - 4-5 rubles (M); herring - 16 rubles; anchovies - 7-10 rubles (S)
Dried fruit, kg.	About 20 rubles (S)
Pickled cucumbers	.5-1 ruble, each (M) in Riga, July 1953
Lemons	5 rubles, each (S)

LUXURY FOODS

Vodka, 40 degrees, liter	50 rubles (S)
Wine, 85 centiliters	13, 15, 17 rubles (S)
"Champagne", Soviet, bottle	33 rubles (S)
Milk chocolate, kg.	100 rubles (S)
Coffee, ground, kg.	25 rubles (S)
Tea, 1st grade, kg.	100-125 rubles (S)

CLOTHING

Wool, medium grade, meter	About 200 rubles (S)
Cotton socks, pair	5-14 rubles (S)
Man's wool suit	500-1,200 rubles (S)
Cotton dress	150 rubles (S)

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Annex A (Cont'd):

CLOTHING

Man's leather jacket	700-800 rubles (S)
Leather shoes	120-350 rubles (S)
Felt boots for winter with leather soles	350-400 rubles (S)
Handbag, artificial leather	50-80 rubles (S)
Man's felt hat	90-150 rubles (S)

MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS

Man's bicycle	1,000 rubles
Ordinary bicycle	650 rubles
Saucepan (tin)	5 rubles
Milk can (10 lit. tin)	30 rubles
Radios	150-900 rubles
Record player	350 rubles

AUTOMOBILES

Small car	"Moskvich" - about 6,000 rubles
Medium car (like Ford)	"Pobeda" - about 9,000 rubles
Motorcycle	1,500-4,000 rubles

MISCELLANEOUS

(Phonograph records were virtually unobtainable, except for recordings of STALIN's speeches)

Electric heaters	about 150 rubles
Electric hot plates (for cooking)	40 rubles for a single burner
Flashlight	about 13 rubles
Flashlight bulbs	1.5 rubles
Flashlight batteries	2 rubles
Wrist watches, 15 jewels	360-400 rubles
Pocket watches, 15 jewels	250-300 rubles
Pocket knives	9-30 rubles
Hair combs	1.5-10 rubles
Safety razors	13 rubles

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Annex A (Cont'd):

MISCELLANEOUS

Razor blades ("Neva", made in Leningrad)	3 rubles, 60 kopeks for 10
Briefcases	50-200 rubles
Fountain pen	about 25 rubles
Smoking pipe	15-20 rubles
Metal cigarette cases	20-30 rubles
Plastic cigarette cases	about 5 rubles
Cigarette holders (simple)	2.5-3 rubles
Wooden cabinet for clothes (veneer)	800 rubles
A pair of skis	50-60 rubles
Prophylactics, each	0.60 rubles

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